

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### UniRac, Inc.

#### New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### New Mexico MEP Helps UniRac, Inc. Win National Manufacturing Award

##### Client Profile:

UniRac builds universal racking systems to hold solar panels in place. The company is located in Albuquerque, New Mexico and recently expanded into Australia. UniRac is a leader in photovoltaic mounting systems and works with solar system designers around the world who are dedicated to sustainable energy. The company employs 30 people.

##### Situation:

UniRac had just started its Lean journey when Richard Welch joined the team as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. He brought with him 15 years of Lean success derived from running programs with General Electric, RF Power Products and Advanced Energy. Prior to Welch's arrival, business performance metrics were not aggressively tracked making it very difficult to determine where to focus improvement efforts. The company, looking for ways to increase productivity, turned to the New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership (New Mexico MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate.

##### Solution:

New Mexico MEP facilitated training in Value Stream Mapping and 5S in order to reduce clutter, minimize travel distances, and increase productivity. Business results were analyzed and a series of metrics and KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) were developed. These metrics now guide the actions of UniRac employees in striving to meet and exceed customer expectations. Another area of Lean improvement was made in inventory which included partnering with key suppliers to ensure a continuing supply of high volume items, just-in-time ordering, and a facility-wide improvement plan. The workplace was organized, and effective inventory replenishment tracking measures were implemented. As a result of embracing Lean approaches, UniRac increased productivity in multiple areas and won the national 2007 Progressive Manufacturing Award from Managing Automation magazine. The honor is given based on mastery of eight disciplines: Leadership, Operational Excellence, Business Model Mastery, Customer Mastery, Data and Integration Mastery, Innovation Mastery, Supply Network Mastery, Training and Education Mastery.

##### Results:

- \* Awarded Managing Automation magazines' 2007 Progressive Manufacturing Award.
- \* Experienced 40 percent revenue growth.

##### Testimonial:

"I am truly encouraged by the acceptance of Lean across the organization. The entire team has embraced the tools and spirit of Lean and are changing the organization daily for the better. Additionally, as an environmentally conscious company who leads the industry in green pursuits, we aggressively practice recycling and waste-product elimination which coincides with the Lean principles

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around waste reduction."

Richard Welch, Vice President and COO